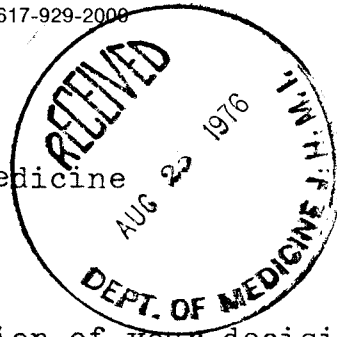


The Boston Globe

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August 16, 1976

Victor A. McKusick, M.D.
Chairman, Department of Medicine
The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Baltimore, Maryland



Dear Dr. McKusick:

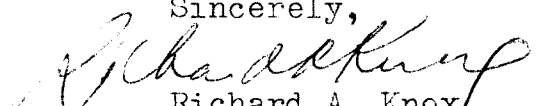
I am writing to express my appreciation of your decision last Friday on the issues raised by Dr. Bernard Davis. I was very much in earnest when I said to you that a decision the other way --- to declare portions of his talk off the record --- would have set a very regrettable precedent for the Short Course, and by very plausible extension for other scientific meetings where controversial topics arise.

It would be very difficult to explain to my editors why The Globe should send me to a meeting where potentially the most newsworthy developments could be declared off-limits. As a veteran now of three Short Courses, I think this would be most unfortunate, not only for myself as one of the reporters privileged to attend, but for my readers. For me, the Short Course has provided grist for many later articles as well as fascinating and useful news stories during that week in August. Perhaps more important, the course has given me the background and the contacts to write about genetics more authoritatively and responsibly, I hope, than I could otherwise have done. Because genetics is becoming ever more central in medicine, the course is an even more item on my agenda than it was six years ago, when I attended my first one. In a very real sense Bernie Davis's request, had it been granted, would have diminished the value of the meeting.

I do understand Prof. Davis's reservations about discussing sensitive issues with the press. I have found in dealing with most wary scientists, however, that these reservations can usually be resolved in a spirit of candor and good faith. I am sorry Prof. Davis does not understand the dynamics of this relationship, nor the implications of his attempt to place prior restraint on reportage of an otherwise open meeting. None of us would have relished writing an article about this fundamental issue the other day, but we all agreed we would have felt compelled to do so if the decision had gone the other way. Such a development would have confirmed some people's worst fears and grossest distortions of what he is trying to say, I'm afraid. And it might have made it far more difficult for Bernie and other scientists to engage in discussion of the issues he raises.

I for one am very happy that did not happen, and I thank you for your part in the successful diplomacy that averted such an incident. I look forward to talking with you in the future, and to attending more Short Courses in the exciting years ahead.

Sincerely,


Richard A. Knox
Medical Editor

cc: Mrs. Dorothy Davis